

Minutes

Tuesday 18 August 2020

Held in Council Chambers, 13 Cottrell Street, Dowerin

1. Welcome, Attendance & Apologies

The Proxy Chair, Cr Holberton, welcomed those in attendance and declared the meeting open at 12.00pm.

In Attendance:

Cr Len Holberton	Shire of Dowerin (Proxy Chair)
Mr Robert Boase	Community Member
Mr Matt Couper	Community Member
Mrs Lyn Phillips	Community Member
Mr Adam Turriff	Community Member
Rebecca McCall	Shire of Dowerin, Chief Executive Officer
Les Vidovich	Shire of Dowerin, Manager Works & Assets
Vanessa Green	Shire of Dowerin, Executive & Governance Officer

Apologies:

Cr Lindsay Hagboom Shire of Dowerin (Chair)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Moved: R Boase

Seconded: A Turriff

That the minutes of the Road Verge Management Advisory Committee Meeting held on 11 March 2019 be confirmed as a true and correct record of proceedings. ([Attachment 2.1A](#))

CARRIED

3. Business Arising

Mrs Phillips advised that a question asked regarding the types of spray being used on road verges was not mentioned in the Minutes of the previous meeting, nor had the question been answered since. The CEO advised the Spray Program is currently being developed and will include the chemicals to be used, and that the Program will be presented at the next meeting.

4. General Business

4.1 Terms of Reference - the Committee are reminded of the Terms of Reference for the Committee which were adopted by Council at its January 2020 meeting (CMRef 0128). The Committee is to operate within the parameters of the Terms of Reference. ([Attachment 4.1A](#))

The Objectives of the Committee were read out at the meeting.

4.2 Code of Conduct - the Committee are reminded of the requirement for all members to abide by and adhere to the Shire's Code of Conduct (CoC). ([Attachment 4.2A](#)). Members are required to sign the Acknowledgement & Commitment contained on the last page of the CoC.

The Acknowledgment & Commitment was signed by Members and returned to staff at the meeting.

4.3 New Population of Threatened Flora - notification was received from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions on 13 June 2019 of a new population of threatened flora on Moonijin West Rd, 3.75km west of intersection with Clinic Rd. Departmental staff have installed roadside markers to indicate the extent of the population and provided a map of the location. The Committee were advised for information purposes only. ([Attachment 4.3A](#))

It was suggested there is another population on Ward Road. The drains are being reinstated around that area so the population is in danger of being destroyed. It was queried whether it is possible to move the drain to avoid potential damage to the plant, which could be investigated. However, neither of the roads are listed in the current Road Verge Management Program.

- 4.4 Road Verge Management Program - Council has allocated funds within its 2020/21 Budget for verge maintenance on numerous roads within the Shire. Works scheduled are in line with typical cross sections drawings from the bottom of the batter and end of the table drain back towards the road surface. ([Attachment 4.4A](#))

It was suggested the road surface needs to be built up, and while there is a need to provide reasonable and safe roads for passable traffic, particularly large trucks, consideration also needs to be given to retaining preferred flora which also creates a habitat for fauna.

The intent behind the Committee being established was to enable expert advice being sought as required prior to the removal of plants, thus reducing the risk of flora being unnecessarily taken out as a result of ignorance. It was suggested that discussions are held prior to road verge clearance occurring to identify rare or unique plants and, where possible, retain them.

- 4.5 Road Program - the Shire of Dowerin's Roads to Recovery (R2R) program for 2020/21 was lodged with R2R and accepted. Advice was later received that there was a cap on the expenditure which has meant a reduction to the road program. The original allocation was \$1,007,858 and the new allocation is \$346,929, a reduction of \$660,929. ([Attachment 4.5A](#))

The Committee were advised that while the allocation is still there for the 5 years, as opposed to the funding being lost altogether, as the funds are now spread across 5 years the full planned works will not be completed within this financial year and will instead be deferred and spread out over the 5 year period. Those roads listed in red will be deferred until following financial years.

- 4.6 Regional Road Group Program 2021/22 - applications for Regional Road Group (RRG) projects close at the end of August 2020. Attached is a copy of the Shire of Dowerin's 5 Year RRG Strategy for proposed submissions and information. ([Attachment 4.6A](#))

The Committee were advised there is approximately \$100,000 in verge pruning to around 100km of verges scheduled across the Shire for the financial year using a forestry mulcher and crew. The pruning needs to be 4.3m in height to allow passage for heavy vehicles. The works are scheduled for September/October prior to summer.

In addition, the trees in Stewart Street are scheduled to be pruned, along with other tree pruning occurring around the townsite currently. This generated discussion amongst the Committee due to issues potentially arising through a loss of strength of any new growth. The Committee were advised that the request for the pruning had arisen from the Annual Electors Meeting and other requests from the community. Some residents wanted the trees removed completely, some requested a light prune, some requested a heavy prune and some did not want the trees to be touched at all. This placed the Shire in a difficult position in trying to identify a suitable compromise for all view points.

The Committee were advised that 10 street light bulbs will be replaced with LED lights as a result of a successful grant application. A further application will be made to replace the remaining street lights. The Committee suggested the height of the lights could be reduced thus minimising the requirement for the trees to be pruned, however there may be a limit on how high the street lights can be. **Note* Subsequent investigations identified it would not be possible to reduce the height of the Stewart Street street lights as the poles are tapered in at the top. Additional cost would need to be incurred to replace the poles should a height reduction be required.*

The Committee suggested a campaign to educate and inform the community about the reasons for any planned works occurring and how the works would be done may be of assistance and benefit.

- 4.7 North Koomerkine Road Scheduled Works – Eremophila sub floccose – detail design plans for the project are currently being completed. Any identified species and locations should be considered.
- 4.8 General Business – discussion occurred regarding a number of matters including:
1. Road surfaces generally, especially where there are large rocks, could be quite dangerous;
 2. Love grass is an issue across the Shire;
 3. Farmers clearing or spraying road verges around their property should not be encouraged;
 4. The concern around the loss of flora and fauna across the Shire generally, but specifically in other land reserves and what could be done to retain or improve these populations;
 5. The safety of road users, particularly on school bus routes, should be a priority over vegetation;
 6. The Road Strategy would be reviewed and presented to the Committee prior to consideration by Council, however it will take the incoming Manager Works & Assets some time to consider this in line with other work commitments and priorities;
 7. The storage of plant and equipment used during road works should be occurring on farmer's properties as opposed to an area of road verge being cleared ;
 8. No clearing works should be occurring without a clearance permit first being obtained from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (though apparently this has not been occurring in the past and clearing has been done without a permit); and
 9. The Shire acknowledged that work practices have not been to the standard required in the past and efforts are being make to improve and rectify this.

5. Close

There being no further business the Proxy Chair thanked those in attendance and declared the meeting closed at 1.13pm.